

Message Text

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42

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

R/AMECONSUL OPORTO 411

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, PO

SUBJECT: MEDIA DEVELOPMENTS: "REPUBLICA" NEWSPAPER CLOSES

SUMMARY: PUBLICATION OF THE DEC 23 ISSUE OF AR-LEFT "REPUBLICA" WAS WITHHELD BY THE STAFF YESTERDAY AFTER THE MILITARY MEN ON THE PAPER'S ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL WERE RELIEVED OF THEIR DUTIES BY THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. IT APPEARS THAT THE PAPER WILL NOT RESUME PUBLICATION, AND THAT THE CONTROVERSIAL "REPUBLICA CASE" MAY BE FINALLY CLOSED. END SUMMARY.

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1. PUBLICATION HALTED: PREPARATIONS FOR PUBLISHING THE DEC 23 EDITION OF "REPUBLICA" WERE HALTED WHEN IT WAS LEARNED THROUGH AN UNHERALED NOTICE IN THE OFFICIAL GAZETTE THAT THE EDITOR, COLONEL JORGE PEREIRA DE CARVALHO, AND THE TWO-MAN MILITARY ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL HAD BEEN RELIEVED OF THEIR POSITION BY THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. IT IS ILLEGAL UNDER THE PRESS LAW TO PUBLISH A PAPER WITHOUT AN EDITOR RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTENTS. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' COMMUNIQUE ISSUED DEC 24 NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED AGAINST "STATE INTERVENTION IN THE CASE," I.E. SUBSIDIES.

2. A BIT OF HISTORY: "REPUBLICA" WAS A RESPECTED JOURNAL WHICH SERVED AS THE UNOFFICIAL SOCIALIST PARTY MOUTHPIECE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF EDITOR RAUL REGO, A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY MEMBER FOR PS. IT HAD A LONG RECORD OF OPPOSITION TO THE SLAAZAR-CAETANO REGIMES. OWNERSHIP WAS HELD PRIVATELY BY REGO AND SOME 3,000 OTHER STOCKHOLDERS. IN MAY 1975, RADICAL-LEFT PRINTERS AND SUPPORTERS WRESTED CONTROL OF THE PAPER FROM REGO AND COMPANY; IN THE UPROAR THAT FOLLOWED, THE PAPER WAS CLOSED DOWN FOR 51 DAYS. THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL THEN NAMED MILITARY MEN AS EDITOR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION AND ALLOWED THE PAPER TO RESUME PUBLICATION. SINCE THEN, VARIOUS CABINET MEMBERS AND MILITARY LEADERS HAVE INDICATED THAT THE PAPER SHOULD BE RETURNED TO THE CONTROL OF ITS RIGHTFUL OWNERS, BUT NO ONE UNTIL NOW WAS WILLING OR ABLE TO TAKE FIRM STEPS TO OUST THE WORKER-OCCUPIERS OF "A REPUBLICA." MEANWHILE, THE PAPER PILED UP HUGE DEFICITS AND ITS CIRCULATION DROPPED FROM 100,000 TO 15,000; THE LAST VASCO GONCALVES GOVERNMENT REFUSED TO GIVE THE PAPER A LOAN--POSSIBLY BECAUSE THE PAPER'S DOMINANT POLITICAL LINE WAS UDP, NOT PCP. THE AZEVEDO GOVERNMENT'S MINISTER OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS HAS SAID ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS THAT THE PERSONALLY FAVORED RETURNING THE PAPER TO ITS OWNERS. MEANWHILE, RAUL REGO BEGAN PUBLISHING A NEW AFTERNOON TABLOID, "A LUTA," WHICH HAS THE SAME EDITORIAL APPROACH--PRO-PS--THAT HIS "REPUBLICA" HAD; SOME OBSERVERS THINK THAT "LUTA" IS EVEN BETTER THAN HIS "REPUBLICA" WAS. IT IS SELLING BETWEEN 70,000 AND 100,000 COPIES DAILY. REGO ONCE SAID HE MIGHT MAKE "REPUBLICA" INTO A MORNING PAPER WHEN HE GOT IT BACK, BUT LATELY HE HAS INDICATED HE MIGHT JUST LET IT DIE.

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3. GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS: THE FACT THAT THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL POINTEDLY DID NOT NAME NEW ADMINISTRATORS AND THE CABINET DECIDED TO SIT ON ITS HANDS ARE CLEAR INDICATIONS THAT THE OFFICIAL DESIRE IS THAT THE PAPER FOLD ONCE AND FOR ALL. PRESUMABLY, THE GOP WOULD DECLARE AS ILLEGAL ANY NEW ADMINISTRATORS OR EDITORS THE RADICAL STAFF OF "REPUBLICA" MIGHT TRY TO NAME--ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE RIGHTFUL OWNERS SHOULD BE

THEONES TO PROPOSE SUCH LEADERS.

4. COMMENT: IF "REPUBLICA" INDEED IS CLOSED DOWN, THIS WILL RESOLVE A LONG-STANDING ISSUE WHICH EARLIER SERVED AS AN IRRITANT BETWEEN THE PS AND THE MILITARY LEADERS OF THE REVOLUTION. A "TWIN PROBLEM" IS RETURN OF RADIO RENASCENCA FACILITIES IN LISBON, ALSO OCCUPIED BY RADICAL LEFTISTS, TO THE CATHOLIC CHURHC--A MOVE THE GOP IS EXPECTED TO MAKE SHORTLY.
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